Northern Qiang language

Northern Qiang is a Sino-Tibetan language of the Qiangic branch, more specifically falling under the Tibeto-Burman family. It is spoken by approximately 60,000 people East Tibet, and in north-central Sichuan Province, China.

Unlike its close relative Southern Qiang, Northern Qiang is not a tonal language.

Northern Qiang	
Rrmearr	
Pronunciation	[ʐmeʐ]
Native to	China
Region	Sichuan Province
Ethnicity	Qiang people
Native speakers	58,000 (1999)[1]

Language family	Sino-Tibetan
	• Qiangic
	  • Qiang
	    • **Northern Qiang**

Language codes	
ISO 639-3	`cng`
Glottolog	`nort2722` (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/nort2722) Northern Qiang[2] `sout3257` (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/sout3257) Southeast Maoxian Qiang[3]

Contents

Northern Qiang dialects

Northern Qiang is composed of several different dialects, many of which are easily mutually intelligible. Sun Hongkai in his book on Qiang in 1981 divides Northern Qiang into the following dialects: Luhua, Mawo, Zhimulin, Weigu, and Yadu. These dialects are located in Heishui County as well as the northern part of Mao County. The Luhua, Mawo, Zhimulin, and Weigu varieties of Northern Qiang are spoken by the Heishui Tibetans. The Mawo dialect is considered to be the prestige dialect by the Heishui Tibetans.

Names seen in the older literature for Northern Qiang dialects include *Dzorgai (Sifan), Kortsè (Sifan), Krehchuh*, and *Thóchú/Thotcu/Thotśu.* The last is a place name.[4]

Sims (2016)[5] characterizes Northern (Upstream) Qiang as the *nu- innovation group. Individual dialects are highlighted in *italics*.

Northern Qiang

- NW Heishui: *Luhua* 芦花镇
- Central Heishui

  - *Qinglang* 晴朗乡
  - *Zhawo* 扎窝乡
  - *Ciba* 慈坝乡
  - *Shuangliusuo* 双溜索乡
  - uvular V's innovation group: *Zhimulin* 知木林乡, *Hongyan* 红岩乡, *Mawo* 麻窝乡
- SE Heishui: *Luoduo* 洛多乡, *Longba* 龙坝乡, *Musu* 木苏乡, *Shidiaolou* 石碉楼乡
- North Maoxian: *Taiping* 太平乡, *Songpinggou* 松坪沟乡
- South Songpan: *Xiaoxing* 小姓乡, *Zhenjiangguan* 镇江关乡, *Zhenping* 镇坪乡
- West Maoxian / South Heishui: *Weigu* 维古乡, *Waboliangzi* 瓦钵乡梁子, *Se'ergu* 色尔古镇, *Ekou*, *Weicheng* 维城乡, *Ronghong*, *Chibusu*, *Qugu* 曲谷乡, *Wadi* 洼底乡, *Baixi* 白溪乡, *Huilong* 回龙乡, *Sanlong* 三龙乡
- Central Maoxian: *Heihu* 黑虎乡
- SE Maoxian (reflexive marker innovation): *Goukou* 沟口乡, *Yonghe* 永和乡

Phonology

The phonemic inventory of Northern Qiang consists of 37 consonants, and eight basic vowel qualities.[6]:22, 25 The syllable structure of Northern Qiang allows up to six sounds.[6]:30

Consonants

The Northern Qiang Consonants[6]:22

	Labial	Dental	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Glottal
Voiceless Stop	p	t			k	q	
Voiceless Aspirated Stop	pʰ	tʰ			kʰ	qʰ	
Voiced Stop	b	d			g		
Voiceless Affricate		ts	tʂ	tɕ			
Voiceless Aspirated Affricate		tsʰ	tʂʰ	tɕʰ			
Voiced Affricate		dz	dʐ	dʑ			
Voiceless Fricative	ɸ	s	ʂ	ɕ	x	χ	h
Voiced Fricative		z	ʐ			ʁ	ɦ
Nasal	m	n		ɲ	ŋ		
Voiceless Lateral		ɬ					
Voiced Lateral		l					

Vowels

Northern Qiang distinguishes between unstressed and <u>long vowels</u> (signified by two small dots, "ː") for all of its vowels except for /ə/ . In addition, there exist 15 diphthongs and one triphthong in the language of Northern Qiang.[6]:25–26

The Northern Qiang Vowel Inventory[6]:25

	Front	Mid	Back
High	i, iː y, yː		u, uː
Mid	e, eː	ə	o, oː
Low	a, aː		ɑ, ɑː

There may not be a significant phonetic difference in sound between /i/ and /e/, and /u/ and /o/, respectively. In fact, they are often used in place of one another without changing the meaning.

<u>Diphthongs</u> and <u>Triphthongs</u>[6]:26

Diphthongs: ia, iɑ, ie, ye, eu, əu, ei, əi, oi, uɑ, ua, uə, ue, ui, ya

Triphthong: uəi

R-coloring

As the Northern Qiang language becomes more endangered, the use of r-coloring is not being passed down to younger generations of the NortherniQang people. As a result, there is great variation in its use. R-coloring is not considered its own phoneme because it is a vowel feature and only used to produce <u>vowel harmony</u> (see below), most commonly signifying a first person plural marking.[6]:28

Example: *mi ꞏwu* [person (<mi):all] 'all the people'[6]:28

Syllable Structure

The Northern Qiang Syllable Canon:[6]:30

(C)   *(initial-consonant)*   *(V)*   *V*

[fric]	-		[glide]	-	
(V)	*(C)*		*(final-consonant)*		
[glide]	[fric]		-		

Examples of Syllables permitted in Northern Qiang[6]:30

Template	Qiang Word	Translation
V	ɑ	'one'
VV	ɑu	'one pile'
VC	ɑs	'one day'
VCC	əχʂ	'tight'
CV	pə	'buy'
CVV	kʰuə	'dog'
CVVV	kuɑi-tʰɑ	'strange'
CVC	pɑq	'intererst'
CVCC	bəχʂ	'honey'
CVVC	duɑp	'thigh'
CCV	xtʂe	'louse'
CCVV	ʂkue	'roast'
CCVVV	ʂkuəi	'mt. goat'
CCVC	ʂpəl	'kidney'
CCVCC	ʂpəχs	'Chibusu'
CCVVC	ʂquɑp	'quiet'
CCVVCC	ɕpiexɬ	'scar'

Phonological Processes

Initial Weakening

When a compound or a directional prefix is added before an aspirated initial, the latter becomes the final of the preceding syllable in the new word. This typically causes it to lose its aspiration.[6]:31–32

Example: *tə*- DIR + ***ba*** 'big' > *təwa* 'become big'[6]:32

Vowel Harmony

Vowel harmony exists in the Mawo (麻窝) dialect. Typically, vowel harmony is used to match a preceding syllable's vowel with the succeeding vowel or its height. In some cases, however, the vowel of a succeeding syllable will harmonize in the opposite way, matching with the preceding vowel. This process occurs across syllables in compounds or in prefix + root combinations. Vowel harmony can also occur for r-coloring on the first syllable if the second syllable of a compound or prefix + root combination already has r-coloring.[6]:35–36

Example: *w**ə*** 'bird' + *ʂpu* 'flock' > *wu**ʂ**pu* '(wild) pigeon'[6]:35

Example: Chinese *zhàog**ù*** + Qiang *p**ə*** 'to do' > *t**ʂ**ɑku**u**-pu* 'take care of'[6]:36

Example: *me* 'not' + *we ˞* 'reduce' > *me ˞-we ˞* 'unceasingly'[6]:35

Example: The realization of the word "one" (a) is influenced by the classifiers:[7]

- e si (a day)
- a qep (a can)
- ɑ pɑu (a packet)
- o ʁu (a barrel)
- ɘ ʐu (a pile)
- ø dy (a mouth)

Epenthetic Vowel

The vowel /ə/ can be embedded within a collection of consonants that are restricted by the syllable canon. The epenthetic vowel is used to combine sounds that would typically be impermissible.[6]:36

Example: *bəl-ə̱s-je* [do-NOM (< -*s*)-good to eat] 'advantageous'[6]:36

Free Variation

For some words, changing or adding consonants produces no phonological difference in meaning. The most common consonant interchange is between /ʂ/ and /χ/.[6]:37

Example: *ʂqu ~ χqu* 'mouth'[6]:37

Example: *kɑp ~ kɑpətʂ* 'orphan'[6]:37

Orthography

<table>
<caption>Northern Qiang Orthography</caption>
<tr><td>Letter</td><td>a</td><td>ae</td><td>b</td><td>bb</td><td>c</td><td>ch</td><td>d</td><td>dd</td><td>dh</td><td>e</td><td>ea</td><td>f</td><td>g</td><td>gg</td><td>gv</td><td>h</td><td>hh</td><td>hv</td><td>i</td><td>iu</td><td>j</td><td>jj</td><td>k</td><td>kv</td><td>l</td></tr>
<tr><td>IPA</td><td>a</td><td>æ</td><td>p</td><td>b</td><td>t͡sʰ</td><td>t͡ʂʰ</td><td>t</td><td>d</td><td>d͡ʐ</td><td>ə</td><td>e</td><td>f</td><td>k</td><td>g</td><td>q</td><td>x</td><td>ɣ</td><td>h</td><td>i</td><td>y</td><td>t͡ɕ</td><td>d͡ʑ</td><td>kʰ</td><td>qʰ</td><td>l</td></tr>
</table>

Letter	lh	m	n	ng	ny	o	p	ph	q	rr	s	sh	ss	t	u	v	vh	vv	w	x	xx	y	z	zh	zz
IPA	ɬ	m	n	ŋ	ȵ	o	pʰ	ɸ	t͡ɕʰ	ʐ	s	ʂ	z	tʰ	u	χ	ɦ	ʁ	w, ʋ̥	ɕ	ʑ	j	t͡s	t͡ʂ	d͡z

Nasalized vowels are indicated with trailing *nn*, rhotacized vowels are indicated with trailing *r*, long vowels are indicated by doubling the vowel letter.

Morphology

Northern Qiang uses affixes in the form of prefixes and suffixes to describe or modify the meaning of nouns and verbs.[6]:39, 43, 120 Other morphological processes that are affixed include gender marking, marking of genitive case, compounding, and nominalization. Northern Qiang also uses non-affixational processes such as reduplication.[6]:39

Noun Phrase

In Northern Qiang, any combination of the following order is allowed as long as it follows this flow. Some of the items found below, such as adjectives, may be used twice within the same noun phrase.[6]:39

Structure of the Northern Qiang noun phrase

GEN phrase + Rel. clause + **Noun** + ADJ + DEM/DEF + (NUM + CL)/PL[6]:39

Gender Marking

Gender marking only occurs in animals. Typically, /mi/ is the suffix for females, while /zdu/ is the suffix for males.[6]:48

Example: *wə-**mi*** 'mare'[6]:48

Example: *puɳu-**zdu*** 'male cat'[6]:48

Pronouns

Pronouns of Northern Qiang can be represented from the 1st, 2nd, or 3rd person, and can refer to one, two, or more than two people.[6]:50

The Northern Qiang Personal Pronouns[6]:50

	Singular	Dual	Plural
1	qɑ	tɕi-zzi	tɕi-le
2	ʔũ	ʔi-zzi	ʔi-le
3	the꞉ / qupu	thi-zzi	them-le

Genitive Case

The genitive marker /-tɕ(ə)/ is placed on the modifying noun. This modifying noun will precede the noun it modifies.[6]:99–100

Example:[6]:100

qɑ-tɕ	*ləɣz*
1sg-GEN	book

'my book'

Verbal Morphology

Changing the meaning of verbs can be done by prefixes and suffixes, or by using reduplication.[6]:120, 123

Verbal Prefixes[6]:120

	Marking in Qiang	Purpose/Meaning
1		intensifying adverb
2	"various"	direction/orientation, or 3rd person indirect directive
3	/mə-/, or /tɕə-/	simple negation, or prohibitive
4	/tɕi/	continuative aspect

	Marking in Qiang	Purpose/Meaning
5	/-ʐ/	causative
6	/-ɑːɑ/	prospective aspect
7	/kə/, or /lə/	'(to) go', or '(to) come' (auxiliary directional verbs)
8	/-jə/	repetition
9	/-ji/	change of state
10	/-l-/	1st person indirect directive
11	/-k/	inferential evidential, mirative
12	/-u/	visual evidential
13	/-ʂɑ/, /-sɑn/, /-ʂə ᴵ/, /-sɑi/, [-wu/ ~ -u]	non-actor person1(sg, 2sg, 1pl, 2pl, 3sg/pl)
14	/-ɑ/, /-n/, /-ə ᴵ/, /-i/, /-tɕi/	actor person (1sg, 2sg, 1pl, 2pl, 3pl)
15	/-i/	hearsay evidential

Reduplication

Repetition of the same root verb signifies a reciprocal action upon one actors, or an ongoing action.[6]:52, 123

Example: *mɑ* 'plaster (a wall)' > *məmɑ* 'be plastering'[6]:123

Other Morphological Processes

Compounding

In Northern Qiang, the modifying noun of the compound must precede the modified noun.[6]:43

Example:[6]:48, 49

khuɑ-ʁl
dog-child
'puppy'

Nominalization

Nouns are created from adjectives or verbs using clitics /-s/, /-m/, or /-tɕ/, the indefinite markers /le/ or /te/, or the definite marker /ke/.[6]:59, 223

Example:[6]:224

tɑwə-tɑ-m   *le-ze*
hat-wear-<u>NOM</u>   <u>DEF</u>-<u>CL</u>
'the person wearing a hat'

Syntax

The language of Northern Qiang has quite a predictable syntax without many variations. The typical basic word order is SOV.[6]:221 Northern Qiang borrows some <u>Mandarin Chinese</u> words and phrases while keeping its own sentence structure.[6]:222

Clause Structure

Order

(TEMP) (LOC) (ACTOR) (GOAL/RECIPIENT) (ADV) (UG) VC (PART)[6]:221

(TEMP = temporal phrase; UG = undergoer; VC = verb complex; PART = clause-final particle)

A sentence in Northern Qiang may be as short as a verb complex, which may just be a predicate noun.[6]:222

Deriving from the order stated above, Northern Qiang is a language with a Subject-Object-Verb sentence structure.

Example:[6]:77

S	O	V
χumtʂi	*ʐətɕ ʰaq-e-ze*	*ħɑ-tʂ*
Xumtʂi	rabbit-one-CL	DIR-pierce(kill)

'Xumtʂi killed a rabbit.'

Code Mixing

Many loan words or loan phrases from Mandarin are used but the word order of these phrases is rearranged to fit the grammatical structure of Northern Qiang.[6]:222

Example:[6]:222

pəs-ŋuəŋi	*ʐmətʂi-sətsim-leː*	*tɕiutɕin*	*ʂə*
today-TOP	emperor-wife-DEF:CL	(after.all	be)
mi-leː	*ŋuə-ŋuɑ?*		
person-DEF:CL	COP-Q		

'Today, is the emperor's wife a human?'

In this sentence, the words "**tɕiutɕin**" and "**ʂə**" are borrowed from Mandarin.

Status

As with many of the Qiangic languages, Northern Qiang is becoming increasingly threatened, with its language status evaluated at 6b.[8] Because the education system largely uses Standard Chinese as a medium of instruction for the Qiang people, and as a result of the universal access to schooling and TV, most Qiang children are fluent or even monolingual in Chinese while an increasing percentage cannot speak Qiang.[9] Much of the population marry people from other parts of China who only speak Mandarin.[6]:12

See also

- Qiangic languages
- Qiang people

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